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## Photo contest to commemorate Rustic Roads milestones

For nearly three decades, Wisconsin's Rustic Roads program has successfully brought together state and local groups to help identify and promote some of our state's most scenic roadways for the leisurely enjoyment of motorists, bikers and hikers. Since the first road was designated in 1975, the Rustic Roads initiative has stood as a national example of how local and state governments can work together to help preserve scenic roads while enhancing local tourism. As we approach the program's 30th anniversary and prepare for designation of the 100th Rustic Road, WisDOT is calling upon local governments and amateur photographers to take part in a first-of-its-kind Rustic Roads Photo Contest.

Local input and involvement has long been a trademark of the Rustic Roads program. While the photo contest has been designed to minimize any administrative burdens on local governments, it allows for local participation in the selection of photographs that will represent a particular road and community. Local governments that have jurisdiction over a Rustic Road will receive a letter, brochures and other materials from WisDOT explaining the photo contest. But in a nutshell, here is how it will work:

- Amateur photographers, civic groups, schools and others will be asked to submit Rustic Road photos through their local municipality. Six photo categories have been established.
- Local governments will determine which photos best capture the unique "personality" of their Rustic Road(s) and will submit to WisDOT a maximum of three photos per category (18 maximum per road).

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*Frank Busalacchi, Secretary,  
Wisconsin Department  
of Transportation*

## An Interview with WisDOT Secretary Frank Busalacchi

### 1. You've been WisDOT Secretary since January of 2003. How does the job differ from your expectations?

As a long-time labor advocate with the Teamsters Union and former truck driver, I've always had a special appreciation and understanding of how important it is to maintain a quality work force and transportation system. Since taking over as WisDOT Secretary, I am continually reminded of this agency's broad roles and responsibilities. Not only are we involved in federal, state and local highway and bridge issues — we also assist with improvements to airports, railroads, harbors, public transit systems, along with bicycle and pedestrian facilities. In addition, there are the State Patrol's safety and law enforcement functions, and the Division of Motor Vehicle's many responsibilities involving vehicles and drivers. Along with our dedicated staff, I really appreciate the outstanding

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*Don Kush, Council Chair, Senior  
Planner, West Central Wisconsin  
Regional Planning Commission*

## Message from Council Chair Don Kush

The often-repeated theme of "Growing Wisconsin's Economy" has been incorporated as a statewide rallying cry to try to address our struggling economy through various economic programs and initiatives. The emphasis of this theme on improving economic development opportunities throughout the state has been supported by a number of program changes and policy directives at the state and local level. Creating jobs and improving the state and local tax base, which, in turn, directly relates to an improved standard of living, is the intended outcome. Without a doubt, this is a goal shared by us all. However, in pursuit of this goal, I believe the relationship of the transportation system to the state's economy bears re-emphasizing.

To recall an often-used cliché, "the transportation system is the engine that drives the economy." This statement reflects the interdependent relationship between these two factors. In fact, two

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## STP-Rural and local bridge projects approved statewide

Governor Jim Doyle recently announced the distribution of \$120.6 million in federal funds for the 2005–2007 Surface Transportation Program (STP)-Rural and the Local Bridge Program. The approved STP-Rural Program (<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/highways/docs/stpr0507.pdf>) provides \$51.3 million for 100 projects in 2006 and 2007 to improve local highways outside of urban areas, primarily county trunk highways. The approved Local Bridge Program (<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/highways/docs/local-bridge0507.pdf>) provides over \$69.3 million in 2006 and 2007 to rehabilitate and replace 248 of the most seriously deficient local bridges on Wisconsin's local highway systems. Projects under both programs are funded 80% with federal dollars and 20% by the local community. For additional information, please contact statewide Program Manager Franco Marcos at (608) 266-1535 or via e-mail at [franklin.marcos@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:franklin.marcos@dot.state.wi.us)

## Electronic newsletter

*The Local Roads and Streets Council newsletter is available exclusively in an electronic format. The newsletter is sent via e-mail to the addresses we have on file in our newsletter distribution list. The newsletter is also available on the WisDOT Web site at <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/lrsc/newsletters.htm>*

*Copies of previous newsletters are also available on the Internet at the same address. To add or change e-mail addresses in the newsletter distribution list, please contact the LRSC via e-mail at [lrsc@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:lrsc@dot.state.wi.us), or contact WisDOT's Kathryn Andren at [kathryn.andren@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:kathryn.andren@dot.state.wi.us) or (608)267-0448.*

## Rustic Roads contest

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- The Rustic Roads photo contest will run between June 1 and December 31, 2004 (to allow photos in all four seasons). WisDOT would like to receive selected photos from municipalities by January 15, 2005.
- The state's Rustic Roads Board will select award-winning photos in each category during spring 2005.
- Local governments that submit award-winning photos will receive a framed 8 by 10-inch print signed by the photographer. Also, the photos will be used as part of future promotional efforts—enhancing the tourism potential and overall visibility of a Rustic Road and local community.

In the end, local governments and photographers will be recognized for their efforts, talents and for the scenic roadways that add character to their community. In turn, WisDOT will have access to a wide selection of photos that can be used as marketing tools for future brochures, Web sites and other promotional efforts on behalf of the Rustic Roads program.

### Racine County highway commissioner's vision lives on

WisDOT would not be sponsoring a Rustic Roads Photo Contest, or even have a Rustic Roads program, if not for the efforts of one visionary county official. While driving to his job as Racine County Highway Commissioner in 1970, Earl Skagen decided that the scenic stretches of a road he passed every day should somehow be preserved for future generations to travel and enjoy. Skagen concluded that a new classification of road be created—the Rustic Road—that would have appropriate speed limits and guidelines to help preserve and enhance the roadway's existing natural characteristics. Skagen's idea became reality when Assembly Bill 658 was signed into law on December 1, 1973, establishing the Rustic Road System. In 1975, Wisconsin's very first Rustic Road, R-1, was named in Taylor County. Today, there are 98 Rustic Roads spanning some 544 miles through 53 counties.

Nearly three decades have passed since Earl Skagen's dream was realized. While many changes have occurred over that time span, the guiding principle behind Rustic Roads remains the same: it is a locally-driven program. Local groups and governments must nominate candidate roads, and roads ultimately accepted into the program remain under local jurisdiction. To qualify, roadways must have outstanding natural features such as rugged terrain, native vegetation and wildlife or other cultural or historic qualities that set the road apart from others in the area. Local governments must pass a resolution favoring Rustic Road designation. The state's 10-member Rustic Roads Board makes final decisions on whether to accept new roads into the system. This final step helps maintain the integrity of the program and the quality of the roads themselves. It also helps ensure that a Rustic Road declaration meets community wishes, and is not misused as a land use planning tool or in other ways that were never originally intended.

To help promote the Rustic Roads program, WisDOT and the state Department of Tourism co-sponsor production of a Wisconsin Rustic Roads booklet that highlights the location and attributes of each road. In addition, WisDOT maintains a Web site that details the roads, and provides local governments and groups all the information needed to attain Rustic Road designation (<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/travel/scenic/rusticroads.htm>).

The next several months will provide you with the opportunity to celebrate this successful partnership that has benefited both state and local governments for nearly 30 years. For additional questions on the Rustic Roads Program, please visit the program homepage at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/travel/scenic/rusticroads.htm> or contact Jane Carrola, WisDOT Rustic Roads Coordinator, at (608) 266-0649 or by e-mail at [jane.carrola@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:jane.carrola@dot.state.wi.us)

## Secretary's Interview

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cooperation and support we receive from public officials, private citizens and businesses, and groups like the Local Roads and Streets Council. There is simply no way our department could meet its diverse responsibilities without the state/local and public/private partnerships that are the foundation of our success.

### 2. You commute from Waukesha County and travel around the state on business. How are our local roads?

There is an ever-increasing awareness of the vast size and vital role of our local roadway system. Of the approximately 112,000 miles of total roadway in this state, local roads account for nearly 90%, or about 100,000 miles. While virtually all motorists rely on local roads for the first and final leg of any given trip, the maintenance and level of service these roads provide is too often taken for granted. That's why we are fortunate to have the LRSC to serve as an advocate and "voice" for the local highway system. With ongoing guidance and input from the LRSC, we can thoughtfully prioritize maintenance and reconstruction needs, and ensure that our investments in improvements match community expectations and generate economic returns. Recognizing the important role of the local road network, WisDOT returns about one-third of all state-collected transportation revenues back to municipalities small and large throughout the state. Still, our transportation needs will always outpace our ability to fund and address them all. But while our financial resources are limited, there is no limit on our ability to work together in search of innovative and effective solutions that address our comprehensive transportation needs. WisDOT stands ready to be an active participant in that process.

### 3. What is the current and near future situation with the funding for Wisconsin's counties to maintain the state highway system?

Governor Doyle understands the important and direct link between sustaining a quality transportation system and "growing" Wisconsin's economy. With that in mind, the

Governor proposed an inflationary increase for roadway maintenance—a proposal that did not survive the legislative process. In fact, maintenance funds in the current budget were decreased by \$33 million from what Governor Doyle had proposed. In late March, I sent a letter to all county highway commissioners commending counties for their efforts this past winter in keeping the state highway system open for business. I also outlined some of the interim steps our department is taking to minimize impacts on the maintenance budget. Prioritizing and meeting highway maintenance needs will be an ongoing challenge. This challenge is compounded by the fact that as maintenance needs continue to grow, so does the overall size of the highway system that needs to be maintained. With the support of all our transportation stakeholder groups throughout the state, we are engaging state legislators in an open dialogue to develop a better understanding of maintenance issues and long-term solutions to funding needs.

### 4. How can the LRSC be more effective as an advisory body to the Secretary?

The LRSC has repeatedly demonstrated its value through its thoughtful deliberations and recommendations regarding local road issues. Thanks to the LRSC's efforts, tremendous progress is being made in the areas of environmental streamlining and in creating a detailed inventory of our local road system through the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads. I look forward to the LRSC's continued involvement in not only identifying key issues, but also in helping us develop workable solutions to what are often complex problems. Groups like the LRSC can also play a vital role in educating lawmakers and citizens alike about the important role and needs of our comprehensive transportation network. I strongly encourage members of the LRSC, county and other municipal officials to communicate their ideas and concerns directly to their state and federal lawmakers to help generate a broader understanding of transportation and related funding issues. A letter, an e-mail or a phone call to a lawmaker can and does make a difference!

## Council Chair's message

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relatively recent publications present a fairly strong position for the transportation system's impact on the state's economy. A July, 2002 WisDOT publication, *Growing Wisconsin's Economy*, focuses on the economic importance of the state's transportation system in supporting the state's varied trade and commerce activities, from agriculture and manufacturing to tourism. While presenting a multi-modal perspective, the report emphasizes the importance of maintaining a high quality road system to promote economic development and job growth in the state. Highway 29, a state Corridors 2020 route, is presented as an example of the economic importance of sound transportation investments. Between 1986 and 2000, the state invested \$450 million to build the 182 mile four-lane Highway 29 from Green Bay to Chippewa Falls. From 1990 to 2001, new or expanding industries and businesses along this corridor created over 7,000 jobs. To further emphasize the economic importance of the designated high priority Corridors 2020 routes, this 3,650 mile statewide system of key four and two-lane routes accounted for 90 percent of the 80,000 jobs created by new or expanding industrial firms in Wisconsin from 1990 to 2001. The combined effect of this state highway system, along with the local road system that provides the direct access to the industries and businesses, underscores their contribution to state and local economic development efforts.

A more recent report, released by Cambridge Systematics in February, 2003, provides a more detailed evaluation of the economic impact of transportation

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### Visit our web site!

The council web site was recently updated and includes membership lists, committee information, meeting schedules, meeting minutes, reports and much more. Please visit the site at <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/lrsc/index.htm>



## WISLR update

### WISLR pilot training a success

During the months of January and February 2004, a view and update training pilot took place for the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR). Attendees learned how to use the system and about information available to local governments via WISLR. They also learned how to update attribute data such as pavement rating and surface type, plus how to use WISLR's Geographic Information System (GIS) map function.

### Visit the WISLR site!

For more information on WISLR, please visit the WISLR homepage at <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/wislr/index.htm>

The purpose of the pilot was to test training material content and gather feedback prior to scheduling sessions this spring and summer. Participants suggested that representatives from WISLR offer a second training option that demonstrates how to view attribute data, use the GIS map feature, and access available reports, maps, and forms. As a result, a second training called View (only) training may become available this spring and summer.

Among pilot participants were LRSC council members Walt Raith from the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and Marilyn Bhend, clerk for the Town of Johnson in Marathon County. When asked who should attend training, Walt stated "people responsible for maintenance, pavement ratings, and improvements to the local road system would benefit from WISLR training." This can include anyone from a town chairman, street supervisor or county commissioner, to a city administrator, town clerk or other municipal employee. In addition to members of LRSC, training included a number of attendees from counties and towns throughout Wisconsin.

As spring approaches, look for information about WISLR training in future LRSC newsletters. People interested in obtaining training information as it becomes available are encouraged to send an e-mail using the following link: [wislrinfo@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:wislrinfo@dot.state.wi.us)

### Pavement analysis tool in test phase

A new tool to provide local governments with rudimentary pavement analysis information is currently in test phase. The tool uses data submitted by local governments, such as pavement rating and surface type, to create reports and GIS maps. The tools are anticipated to become available to towns, villages and cities beginning in May 2004. The pavement analysis tools will become available to counties in June 2004.

## TEA builds jobs and transportation systems

The Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) Program is a "smart growth" tool that links economic development efforts with transportation improvements. The program helps attract new employers to the state and encourages businesses already in Wisconsin to remain and expand by providing 50% state grants for infrastructure improvements. Large employers can have significant impacts on a community's road, rail, harbor or airport facilities. TEA has been used in the past to build or improve streets, construct railroad spurs, improve docks, and make runway improvements to assist a community to better accommodate a new or expanding employer.

The City of Reedsburg, for example, received four TEA grants in the 1990's. Two grants were used to build streets to serve a Lands' End phone and distribution center. In 2003, Lands' End peak seasonal employment was approximately 1,900 individuals. The grant was utilized to provide access to work over a four-lane asphalt street. Another grant was used to provide Pace Industries and Midwest Hardwoods Corp. with rail service. Pace can now receive large volumes of plastic pellets in 190-ton hopper cars to make extruded plastic sheets. Midwest receives hardwoods from long distances by rail and manufactures furniture and cabinets. The fourth TEA grant provided improved access roads for an existing vegetable canner and a new company that manufactures hydraulic filters, fittings, and accessories.

The program is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and provides grants of up to \$1 million. Projects are required to begin within three years of grant award and must create or retain employment through development of a transportation improvement. The program is designed to implement an improvement more quickly than normal state programming processes allow. The 50% local match can come from any combination of local, federal, or private funds along with in-kind services. Applications are administered based on a first come/first served process and grants are awarded once all eligibility information is complete and satisfactory.

The TEA program was created in 1987 and has provided \$56.6 million in grants to 160 communities and 248 businesses. TEA has helped to create or retain 55,371 jobs since the program's inception. For more information on the TEA program, please contact Gati Grundmanis, TEA Program Manager, at 608-266-3488 or [gati.grundmanis@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:gati.grundmanis@dot.state.wi.us) or visit the program homepage at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/aid/tea.htm>

### Send us your meeting and training events.

We would be interested in adding your meetings and other activities to the LRSC Calendar of Events. Please send events relating to the local road system in Wisconsin to the LRSC mailbox at [lrsc@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:lrsc@dot.state.wi.us)

## Council Chair's message

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investments. The report, *Transportation Improvements Grow Wisconsin's Economy: The Economic Benefits of Transportation Investments*, provides a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the economic impacts of transportation investment in Wisconsin. The report's detailed analysis identifies measurable benefits to the economy resulting from investments in transportation. A brief summary of these benefits include the following:

- Creates jobs while boosting industry competitiveness and productivity.
- Enhances household well-being.
- Strengthens local, regional, and state economies.
- Boosts state tax revenue.
- Facilitates business and leisure travel.
- Reduces economic losses associated with crashes.
- Reduces economic losses associated with congestion.

A key finding of the study indicated that the proposed long-term additional investment (over a 21 year period) identified in the State Highway Plan is expected to result in \$3.00 worth of economic benefits for every \$1.00 invested above the amount needed to maintain current performance conditions on the State Trunk Highway System. It would be very difficult to find a better investment in today's economy.

The interconnectivity of the state highways and local roads and streets throughout the state form a seamless system which our economy and quality of life depend on. During our current period of a struggling economy, it is easy to lose sight of the long-term effects of the investment decisions that are made today. It becomes acceptable to reduce road maintenance funding and delay or eliminate needed transportation infrastructure improvements when there is no perceived immediate impact. However, as the two referenced reports strongly indicate, transportation investments are integrally linked to economic vitality, and the ability to "Grow Wisconsin's Economy" is largely influenced by the transportation investment decisions that are made today.



## Calendar of events

Below are meetings and training events related to the local road network in Wisconsin. Please submit events for inclusion in future LRSC newsletters to [lrsc@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:lrsc@dot.state.wi.us)

**Local Roads and Streets Council meetings** are held every other month in the city council chambers in Wisconsin Rapids beginning at 9 a.m. Upcoming council meetings will be held on May 27, July 22, September 23 and December 2. Interested people are invited to attend council meetings. Various LRSC Committee meetings are also typically held every other month in locations around the state. Please contact WisDOT's Kathryn Andren at [kathryn.andren@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:kathryn.andren@dot.state.wi.us) or (608)267-0448 to confirm meeting dates and times.

**April 28–29, 2004:** Wisconsin County Highway Association Commissioner's Training, Baymont Inn and Suites, Waupaca. For questions on this event, please contact Dan Fedderly, WCHA Administrative Coordinator, at (715)643-5135 or go to their Web site at <http://www.wcha.net>

**May 5–7, 2004:** American Public Works Association – Wisconsin Chapter Spring Conference, West Bend. Please contact Terrance Kiekhaefer at (262)335-5079 or [springwb@ci.west-bend.wi.us](mailto:springwb@ci.west-bend.wi.us) for questions or go to the APWA Web site for the Wisconsin chapter at <http://www.wisconsin.apwa.net>

**June 7–10, 2004:** Wisconsin County Highway Association Summer Conference, Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells. For questions on this event, please contact Dan Fedderly, WCHA Administrative Coordinator, at (715)643-5135 or go to their Web site at <http://www.wcha.net>

**September 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21 & 22, 2004:** One day Winter Road Maintenance workshops provided by the University of Wisconsin Transportation Information Center (UW-TIC) at seven sites across the state. Please contact the UW-TIC at (800)442-4615 for questions and registration or go to their Web site at <http://tic.engr.wisc.edu/workshops.lasso>

**October 3–5, 2004:** Wisconsin Towns Association Annual Statewide Convention, Paper Valley Hotel, Appleton. Please contact WTA at (715)526-3157 for questions or go to their Web site at <http://www.wisctowns.com>

**October 27–29, 2004:** League of Wisconsin Municipalities 106th Annual Conference, Radisson Hotel, La Crosse. Please contact the league at (608)267-2380 for questions or go to their Web site at <http://www.lwm-info.org>

**November 3–5, 2004:** American Public Works Association – Wisconsin Chapter Fall Conference, Fond du Lac. Please contact Mark Lentz at (920) 929-3343 or [mlentz@ci.fond-du-lac.wi.us](mailto:mlentz@ci.fond-du-lac.wi.us) for questions or go to the APWA Web site for the Wisconsin chapter at <http://www.wisconsin.apwa.net>

## Questions

Please e-mail the council with your questions at [lrsc@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:lrsc@dot.state.wi.us), or contact:

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